

Truman Beckwith House  
42 College Street  
Providence, Rhode Island  
Providence County

HABS No. 21

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
26-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Philip D. Creer, District Officer  
14 College Street, Providence, Rhode Island

TRUMAN BECKWITH HOUSE  
42 College Street  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
26-

Owner: Handicraft Club

Date of Erection: About 1826

Architect: John Holden Greene

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Very good

Number of Stories: Two stories and basement

Materials of Construction: Exterior walls brick with wood portico & cornice and stone lintels and sills. Hipped roof of tin with monitor top. Balustrades surmounted cornices of main roof and monitor.

Other Existing Records: "Old Providence"-Merchants National Bank publication, photograph P.38.

The Rhode Island Guide--Ref. P.272.

Early Homes of Rhode Island-Downing, drawing, P.320. References, PP.327 353-355-363-371. Photograph, P.431, hall and stairs. Photograph, P.435, mantelpiece in the back parlor. Reference P. 437.

Rhode Island Historical Society, Street Directory for 1824-1826, 1828-1830-1832.

Life of Truman Beckwith-Rhode Island Biographical Cyclopedia, Page 101.

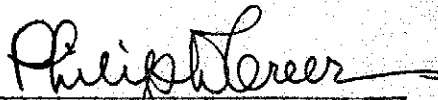
Other Existing Records:  
(continued)

Owners & Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, R. I. in 1798, also in 1759-by Henry R. Chace, printed in 1914.

Providence in Colonial Times, by G.S.Kimball, printed in Providence, R. I. in 1888. Reference P.371.

Additional Data:  
Transcript of Records  
City Hall, Providence, R.I.

		1798	Land owned by Jabez Bowen
			Remained in the Bowen family until 1821.
November	19	1821	Mary Dumont Bowen sold to Truman Beckwith.
November	11	1893	Property remained in Beckwith family until November 11, 1893, when the heirs formed the Beckwith Land Company.
April	8	1925	The Beckwith Land Co. conveyed to the Handicraft Club.
To date		1939	The Handicraft Club.

  
Philip D. Creer  
District Officer for  
Rhode Island

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-21

## TRUMAN BECKWITH HOUSE (NOW HANDICRAFT CLUB)

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
26-

Address: 42 College Street (northeast corner College and Benefit Streets), Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.  
PLAT 12, LOT 216

An addendum to  
Beckwith House (Handicraft Club)  
42 College Street  
Providence, Rhode Island  
in HABS Catalog (1941)

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Handicraft Club

Present Use: Club house used for meeting rooms and studios.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This large brick house built in 1827-1828, is an outstanding example of the work of the architect John Holden Greene.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1782 Oliver Bowen sells for 300 £ lawful silver money to Jabez Bowen a certain lot of land containing 1-1/4 acres with a Dwelling House Bound: S by College Street; W by Benefit Street; N by Fenner and N Waterman: E by gardens of President Manning, and is part of the estate descended to me by the last Will and testament of my honored Uncle Daniel Abbott, dec. . . Deed Book 21, page 331, in Providence, Rhode Island.
- 1816 WILL of Jabez Bowen: . . . "also to Sarah B, Mary, and John D Bowen children of my son Oliver the remainder of the land not before given away on College Street to bound E/ly on my son Henry's lot. Wills Book 12, page 12, in Providence City Hall.
- 1821 Mary D Bowen, singlewoman, sells for \$2500 to Truman Beckwith a certain lot of land with Dwelling

House on the E side of Benefit Street, bounded: W by Benefit Street; N by Earle Pearce; E by John Whipple 125'; S by College Street 105', it being moiety of a lot of land given by my grandfather Jabez Bowen, dec., to my brother John, now dec., to my sister Sarah B Bowen and myself by his last will and testament, and divided with John Whipple Esq., as per deed of division. . . . Deed Book 46, page 37, in Providence City Hall.

1828 Truman Beckwith listed for first time as living here. . . . Providence Directory.

1880 Property was taxed to Abby H Beckwith

1894 Property was taxed to the Beckwith Land Company.

1925 Handicraft Club buys the property

2. Date of erection: 1827-1828.
3. Architect: John Holden Greene.
4. Builder: Zachariah Chafee, brick-maker (family information).
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The house originally had roof and monitor balustrades. The stables and other appurtenances connected to the house on the east have been remodelled for various club uses.
6. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 99, 128.  
Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 431, 433, 435, 437.  
Norman Morrison Isham, John Holden Greene, unpublished mss. in possession of John Hutchins Cady, Providence, Rhode Island.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
December 1961.

## PART II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large, two-and-a-half-story brick house with a monitor roof, built in 1872-1828. In its general form it is characteristic of Greene's work of this period, and the unusual motifs and proportions of the detail are an example of his originality and inventiveness.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Large rectangular brick house, five bays wide, two-and-a-half stories, faces south on hillside, northeast corner of College and Benefit Streets.
2. Foundations: Granite, regular coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Pressed brick walls in running bond. Brownstone trim, painted white.
4. Porches: One-story, Ionic entrance porch, fluted columns at corners, full entablature and cornice, parapet rail.
5. Chimneys: End chimneys, three in main block, one in wing.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors: Fan-lit, elliptical doors in entrance porch.
  - b. Windows: Six over six light double hung windows in main block. Twelve over eight light in rear of wing. Palladian type window over entrance porch enframed with Gothic colonettes.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hip, low monitor, shingles.
  - b. Cornice: Drilled mutule cornice on main block with beaded bed mold (beads not carved in rear but only roughed out) and pendants. Wing has molded cornice with drilled ovolo bed mold. Originally the roof had double balustrades.
  - c. Dormers: One modern dormer in rear.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan, double parlor with two fireplaces on west, may have been two parlors originally, parlor on southeast, dining room on north behind central hall, kitchen and other rooms in wing to east. Plan of second floor similar, original bedrooms now used for workrooms and studios.
2. Stairways: Main stairway in entrance hall, open well, 180° curve, open string, sawn scroll step end ornaments, oval handrail scrolled around slender turned newel at bottom, very slender rectangular balusters, two per step. Back stair in wing, enclosed, U-shape with winders.
3. Flooring: Original wide board floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doors: Six-panel wood doors, sunk flat panels. Panel moldings on doors in southeast parlor are flat bands of reeding with corner blocks. Deep molded door trim with undercut moldings, corner blocks, plinths.
6. Trim: Molded plaster ceiling cornices with deep undercut moldings, plaster ceiling medallions in west parlor and dining room, paneled folding interior shutters, paneled window aprons. Molded chair rail. Similar trim on second floor, simpler in rear and the wing.
7. Hardware: Silver plated knobs in west parlor, brass elsewhere.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central. Two white marble mantels in west parlor, Ionic pilasters in low relief. Wood mantel, apparently later, in southwest parlor. Three fireplaces on second floor with wood mantels.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House situated on small, elevated lot, northeast corner College and Benefit Streets.
2. Enclosures: Hedge on east. Stone retaining walls on south and west, regular coursed ashlar in large blocks on south, random on west, surmounted by open wood fence.
3. Outbuildings: The original brick carriage house entirely remodeled for club use. The Carriage house joined to

house by archway at east, probably later than house.

4. Walks, driveways: Flagstone and brick walks, cobblestone drive.
5. Landscaping: Informal gardens and terraces on the sides.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
December 1961.